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ABSTRACT

This publication contains two reports describing the development and beginning evaluations of two separate programs of the Baltimore (Maryland) School and Family Connections Project designed to increase parents' involvement in their children's learning in urban middle grades schools. The first report, "Reactions of Parents, Students, and Teachers to Middle School Orientation Days" (S. C. Herrick and J. L. Epstein), examines the reactions of 101 parents, 321 students, and 20 teachers to the Orientation Days program at Hampstead Hill Middle School (Maryland), which was designed to improve the school's communication with parents of new sixth-graders. The second report, "Reactions of Parents to School Newsletters in the Middle Grades" (J. L. Epstein and S. C. Herrick), examines the reactions of parents (n=70 families) to the Parents and Teachers Newsletter at Booker T. Washington Middle School (Maryland), which was initiated to make parents feel welcome at the school and provide them with information about school programs and workshops held at the school. Both programs were successful as initial efforts in reaching and involving families of middle grades students, but they have considerable room for improvement. The programs are being revised and extended in response to their evaluations. Statistical data are provided in three tables. Three appendices to the first report present results from parents, teachers, and students. Two appendices to the second report contain the survey and parent responses. (Author/SLD)

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Improving School and Family Partnerships In Urban Middle Grades Schools: Orientation Days and School Newsletters

Joyce L. Epstein and Susan C. Herrick

Report No. 20

August 1991

CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON EFFECTIVE SCHOOLING FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

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Improving School and Family Partnerships In Urban Middle Grades Schools: Orientation Days and School Newsletters

Joyce L. Epstein and Susan C. Herrick

Grant No. R117 R90002

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Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students
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The Center

The mission of the Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students (CDS) is to significantly improve the education of disadvantaged students at each level of schooling through new knowledge and practices produced by thorough scientific study and evaluation. The Center conducts its research in four program areas: The Early and Elementary Education Program, The Middle Grades and High Schools Program, the Language Minority Program, and the School, Family, and Community Connections Program.

The Early and Elementary Education Program

This program is working to develop, evaluate, and disseminate instructional programs capable of bringing disadvantaged students to high levels of achievement, particularly in the fundamental areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. The goal is to expand the range of effective alternatives which schools may use under Chapter 1 and other compensatory education funding and to study issues of direct relevance to federal, state, and local policy on education of disadvantaged students.

The Middle Grades and High Schools Program

This program is conducting research syntheses, survey analyses, and field studies in middle and high schools. The three types of projects move from basic research to useful practice. Syntheses compile and analyze existing knowledge about effective education of disadvantaged students. Survey analyses identify and describe current programs, practices, and trends in middle and high schools, and allow studies of their effects. Field studies are conducted in collaboration with school staffs to develop and evaluate effective programs and practices.

The Language Minority Program

This program represents a collaborative effort. The University of California at Santa Barbara is focusing on the education of Mexican-American students in California and Texas; studies of dropout among children of recent immigrants are being conducted in San Diego and Miami by Johns Hopkins, and evaluations of learning strategies in schools serving Navajo Indians are being conducted by the University of Northern Arizona. The goal of the program is to identify, develop, and evaluate effective programs for disadvantaged Hispanic, American Indian, Southeast Asian, and other language minority children.

The School, Family, and Community Connections Program

This program is focusing on the key connections between schools and families and between schools and communities to build better educational programs for disadvantaged children and youth. Initial work is seeking to provide a research base concerning the most effective ways for schools to interact with and assist parents of disadvantaged students and interact with the community to produce effective community involvement.

Table of Contents

Reactions of Parents, Students, and Teachers To Middle School Orientation Days (Susan C. Herrick and Joyce L. Epstein)	Report I
Reactions of Parents to School Newsletters In the Middle Grades (Joyce L. Epstein and Susan C. Herrick)	Report II

Abstract

This publication includes two reports. They describe the development and beginning evaluations of two separate programs of the Baltimore School and Family Connections Project designed to increase parent involvement in their children's learning in urban middle grades schools. The first report examines the reactions of parents, students, and teachers to the Orientation Days program at Hampstead Hill Middle School, which was designed to improve the school's communication with parents of new sixth-grade students. The second report examines the reactions of parents to the P.A.T. (Parents and Teachers) Newsletter at Booker T. Washington Middle School, which was initiated to make parents feel welcome at the school and provide them with key information about school programs and workshops held at the school. Appendices to each report contain the survey and interview materials used with parents, students, and teachers to elicit their reactions. Both programs were successful as initial efforts in reaching and involving families of middle grades students, but they also have considerable room for improvement. The programs are being revised and extended in response to their evaluations.

Acknowledgments

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We also acknowledge the assistance of Jocelyn Myers, Leslie Richardson, Karen Clark Salinas, and Kathleen Stephany.

Reactions of Parents, Students, and Teachers to Middle School Orientation Days

Susan C. Herrick and Joyce L. Epstein

Introduction

The goal of the Hampstead Hill Middle School's Parents Involved in Education (PIE) Team is to improve student achievement by increasing parent involvement in their children's education through improved communications, volunteerism, and assistance with homework. One program designed to improve the school's communications with parents of new sixth grade students is called Orientation Days. This report outlines the Orientation Days activities and summarizes parent, student, and teacher reactions to the program. The PIE Team hoped that Orientation Days would foster a spirit of cooperation among sixth grade teachers, parents, and students and provide better understanding of the school's program and expectations for students.

The PIE Team designed Orientation Days to introduce parents to their children's middle school. The program aimed to: 1) inform parents and new students about the curriculum and homework expectations; 2) inform them about school rules, regulations, and required supplies; 3) introduce them to the teachers and staff; 4) familiarize them with the school building and premises; and 5) establish good family-school relations at the time of the transition from elementary to middle school.

Orientation is a new way for 6th graders at Hampstead Hill Middle School to begin the year. Instead of all students attending on the first day of school, incoming 6th graders were divided alphabetically into three groups, with each group of students and their parents invited to one of the first three days of school. Letters were sent to parents in advance to explain the program.

The Orientation Program began in the auditorium where the parents and students were welcomed by the principal and introduced to the assistant principal, staff, and members of the PIE Team. Parents and students were escorted by their homeroom teachers to their classrooms to learn about their schedules, which they then followed in an abbreviated form, moving from class to class as the students would do on regular school days. Teachers were encouraged to provide information on their curricula, supplies needed, and policies about discipline, homework, and scholarship. Parents, students, and teachers met for lunch in the cafeteria on a staggered schedule, and, afterward, resumed their class visits. At 1:30, all adjourned to the auditorium where the Hampstead Hill 7-page handbook, *Welcome to Hampstead Hill Middle School*, was distributed and the school rules, regulations, and dress code were discussed. Parents were introduced to the staff nurse, librarian, guidance counselor, department chairs, and others who encouraged the students to participate in school activities. To close the day, refreshments were served.

Parent, Student, and Teacher Surveys

During the summer, the PIE Team leader met with staff from the Fund for Educational Excellence and The Johns Hopkins University to plan an evaluation of Orientation Days. Three short surveys were designed to obtain the reactions of parents, students, and teachers to the concept and program.

The **Parent Survey** consisted of eight questions that obtained 36 items of information about parents' feelings about Orientation, overall impressions, subjects about which they want information, and what they learned during Orientation Days. Questions were asked about their own education, work, and number of children who have attended Hampstead Hill, in order to obtain a brief profile of the parents who participated. Parents were also encouraged to make comments and request information about the school in two open-ended questions. (See Appendix A.)

The **Student Survey** consisted of eight questions that obtained 20 items of information about students' reactions to meeting teachers and other students, having parents at the school, the orientation program itself, and their general attitudes about school and college aspirations. Students were asked to rate themselves academically and identify the school they attended last year. (See Appendix B.)

The **Teacher Survey** consisted of 11 questions covering 29 items of information about teachers' attitudes about Orientation Days, parent involvement, and how well they thought parents and students understood the curriculum, the need for school supplies, discipline, and homework. Teachers were also asked to estimate how many families they met over the three days and to provide some background information about themselves, including years of teaching, years at Hampstead Hill, and 6th grade subjects taught. (See Appendix C.)

Survey Results

This section summarizes key results that may assist the Hampstead Hill PIE Team and teachers to plan the next Orientation Days and other parent involvement programs. The results are based on surveys returned by 101 parents, 321 students, and 20 teachers. All responses are reported in Appendices A, B, and C.

According to the sign-in sheets, 144 parents attended one of the three days. This is, however, an underestimation of the actual number who attended because some parents and other adults did not sign in. Of the 590 students who are enrolled as 6th graders at Hampstead Hill, 321 (54%) returned questionnaires. Students were asked to report who came to school with them. In round figures, 37% of the students who attended came by themselves; 42% came with their mothers; 7% with fathers; 7% with another relative; 3% with a grandmother; 2% with another adult; and 2% came with more than one relative. Of the students who responded to the survey, 63% (202 students) were accompanied by someone in their family.

Based on these results, at least one third (34%) of the families of <u>all</u> sixth graders attended Orientation Days with their children. This, too, is an underestimation because some students did not return questionnaires and some substitute teachers did not distribute surveys to parents or students.

Twenty-seven 6th grade teachers participated in Orientation Days, and 20 (74%) returned questionnaires. Some regular teachers were absent and substitute teachers did not participate.

Parents' Profile. Each of the Orientation Days was attended by a diverse group of Hampstead Hill parents, many taking time off from work to attend. Close to 60% of the parents who responded were new to the school, while the rest had one or more children at Hampstead Hill sometime in the past. About 10% had more than one child at the school this year.

About 60% of the parents who attended worked full-time outside the home; just over 10% worked part-time; and about 30% did not work outside the home. About 25% did not complete high school; close to 50% of the parents were graduated from high school; and about 25% went beyond high school in their education. In an earlier survey of Hampstead Hill Middle School (1987), about 70% of the parents reported that they worked full-time; 35% reported that they did not graduate from high school; and 23% reported more than a high school education. The parents who attended Orientation Days were representative of the school's families, with less-educated parents only slightly underrepresented.

Students' Profile. The incoming sixth graders came from over 30 elementary schools, including five main feeder schools in Baltimore City. These students reported that they liked school at least some of the time (86%) and expected to enjoy Hampstead Hill (88%), with 52% giving a very positive response. Most would like to go to college (89%), although about 30% of the students reported that they usually found schoolwork dull and boring. About 15% ranked themselves top students; about 46% said they were good students; 18% judged themselves average; 20% judged themselves to be fair; and 2% believed they were poor students. Overall, the new students like school, want challenge, and are aiming toward college.

The students came from over 30 elementary schools, including eight main feeder schools in Baltimore City.

Teachers' Profile. The teachers at Hampstead Hill are seasoned veterans. The average number of years taught was 17.7 years, with an average of 11.7 years taught at Hampstead Hill. Their experience ranged from new teachers in their first year to 34 years of service. The teachers who responded to the survey teach math, English, science, social studies, reading, physical education, business and computer skills, industrial arts, home economics, art, and special education.

Reactions to Orientation Days

Nearly all respondents agreed that Hampstead Hill made parents feel welcome on Orientation Days (97% of students, 98% of parents and 100% of teachers).

Table 1 shows that 88% of the parents, 90% of the teachers, and 57% of the students rated Orientation "good" or "excellent." On a scale of 1 ("a waste of time") to 4 ("excellent"), parents' average score was 3.3, teachers averaged 3, and students averaged 2.8.

Table 1
Overall, Orientation Day was...

	A Waste of Time	OK	Good	Excellent
Parents (N=96)	1%	12%	43%	45%
Students (N=313)	3%	40%	28%	29%
Teachers (N=20)		10%	80%	10%

What Parents Had to Say. The parents were very positive about Orientation Days. Almost all of the parents (96%) felt that their children wanted them to come to Orientation. In general, 86% of the parents felt that they knew more about Hampstead Hill than they did before they came. This was true even though about 42% had older children enrolled at the school. One parent commented: "I've had other children at Hampstead Hill, but this is the first time I've really gotten to learn about the school!"

When asked to make comments or suggestions, over a third of the parents (35%) responded with mostly positive comments about the day. For example:*

> I think it was very helpful for me and my child to get the feel of the school and going from class to class.
>
> I feel more relaxed about my son coming to this school. I was very afraid before this day.
>
> This year is much better and a lot less scary than other years for the children.
>
> I feel very strongly that my child will and can get a good education from Hampstead.

Parents who felt most welcome at the school and who thought they learned the most gave Orientation Days higher ratings overall than other parents. Neither parents' education, work schedules nor prior experience with the school influenced the reactions of parents to Orientation Days. That is, parents had similar reactions whether they had more or less education, worked at home or outside, or whether or not they had older children who attended Hampstead Hill.

What Students Had to Say. About 70% of the students said they wanted someone from home to come with them to Orientation Day, although 37% of the students came alone.

We asked students to compare Orientation to a regular school day. Students were evenly divided with 49% preferring a regular school day and 51% preferring an Orientation Day. Several students complained: "I didn't like Orientation Day that much because I didn't get any work." But others expressed the opposite view: "I like Orientation because you do not have to do any work today."

Students mentioned climbing flights of stairs or otherwise getting lost in the school building (6%) as sources of opening day jitters. Some felt a little lost. "It is lonely," one child wrote. Another stated: "I did not like when we got our classes mixed up." Of course, the idea of Orientation Days for sixth graders is to help them become familiar with the school and the schedule before regular days begin. Some students, however, may need a little more reassurance. Overall, when asked whether Hampstead Hill should have Orientation again next year, 81% of the students agreed.

Not all students gave high ratings to Orientation Days, but those who did tended to be students who like school and schoolwork "a lot." Importantly, neither students' ability nor college plans was associated with their overall rating of Orientation Days. That is, good students were just as likely to enjoy Orientation Days as poor students. Students' feelings about the connections of school and family influenced their reactions. Those who were particularly positive about having their parents come to school for an Orientation Day strongly supported having Orientation Days again next year and wrote more positive comments than other students.

Most students (70%) contributed comments about Orientation Days. They enjoyed meeting their teachers and fellow students (32%), learning about the curriculum (11%) and generally enjoying the day (22%). Five percent said they liked having the day off and/or having little work to do. The students' comments were mainly positive:

> I like Orientation Day. Because on your first day of school you won't be nervous.
>
> I liked it when my mother came with me today.
>
> I like the way [they talked] to us about what they have plan[n]ed for us.
>
> I like that we got to find our classes before it really start[ed]
>
> It was fun to meet your teachers and to know w[h]at you['re] going to learn in the future.
>
> I liked everything and will tell everybody about the school because they thought it was a bad school.

What Teachers Had to Say. All the teachers agreed (with 70% strongly agreeing) that Orientation should be held again next year. Teachers (90%) judged Orientation Days to be very helpful or quite helpful to all concerned. Two teachers expressed different reasons for their support:

> I think it was a good program. One useful aspect that may not have been expected was

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* All comments throughout this report are in the parents' own words.

that it gave an opportunity to work out problems with only a few students present (e.g., lunch and bus tickets).

Dividing the class enabled me to cover expectation[s] with more attentiveness by the children. Child[ren] and parents working together more would be an expected outcome.

Teachers with more experience tended to agree more strongly that parents are usually welcome in the school, but, in general, years of teaching experience was unrelated to their reactions to Orientation Days. What did matter were teachers' attitudes. Teachers who said it was "not at all hard" for them to prepare for Orientation, and "not at all disruptive" of their teaching plans, were most sure that parents felt welcome and that students wanted their parents to come.

Teachers were particularly likely to suggest having Orientation Days again next year if they believed the program was helpful to students, and informed parents about the supplies their children need and the skills the students will learn. The teachers were split evenly over whether other grades should be involved.

Curriculum

Overall, teachers and parents felt that parents gained insight into the curriculum for the school year. Teachers were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement "Because of Orientation Day, more parents know what skills their children will learn." Only 5% disagreed; 60% agreed and 35% strongly agreed.

Parents were asked how much they learned about the subjects their children would take in grade 6, including math, English, reading, social science, science, business education, art, health education, physical education, industrial arts, and music. Not all parents attended presentations on each subject, but over 85% reported they had received "a lot" or "some" information on the subjects they had heard about. Most parents (70% to 80%) attended classes in math, English, and reading, but fewer than half attended classes in other subjects.

Parents also checked a list of subjects about which they might want more information to help their children this year. Most parents said they want information about math (72%), reading (69%), and English (66%) to better help their child at home. Many also want information about science (41%) and social studies (40%). Also, 28% said they want information about summer learning activities.

Family-School Connections

Other goals of Orientation were to help parents become more aware of teachers' discipline policies, school supplies their children need, the school's need for volunteers, and how parents can be a resource in helping their children with schoolwork at home.

All parents surveyed agreed (with 74% strongly agreeing) that as a result of Orientation, they "know how the teachers want [their children] to behave in school." Ninety-five per cent (95%) of the teachers agreed that parents attending Orientation learned more about how to support the school's discipline policies (with 35% strongly agreeing and 5% disagreeing). Sixty-five per cent (65%) of the teachers strongly agreed that Orientation Days successfully informed parents about the supplies their children needed for school.

Most teachers (70%) thought that more parents may volunteer to help at school as a result of Orientation Days. Parents offered comments such as "[I] will try hard to do my best to help out."

All of the parents who responded believe they will be able to help with schoolwork at home and 95% of the teachers agreed. Of the students, 87% reported that they ask a parent to help them with homework when they have a question. The positive responses provide strong evidence of parents' willingness to monitor and assist their own children on schoolwork at home. One parent wrote: "I have learned a lot. I want to be able to help the teacher help my child." Eighty-four per cent (84%) of the Hampstead Hill teachers agreed that "more teachers will involve parents in children's home learning activities this year" as a result of Orientation.

The Hampstead Hill Climate

Teachers were asked to indicate whether they agree with the statement: "Compared to other schools, this school has one of the best climates for teachers, students, and parents." Forty-five per cent (45%) agreed; 30% disagreed; 5% strongly disagreed; and 20% declined to answer. On a 4-point scale (where 1 means strong disagreement with the statement and 4 means strong agreement that the school has a good climate), teachers' ratings averaged 2.5. This is somewhat higher than the 2.14 average obtained on this item in a survey of Hampstead's teachers in 1987.

The sixth graders' parents gave the school ratings of 3.6 on a scale of 4. Nearly all the parents (99%) agreed (with 60% strongly agreeing) that "Hampstead Hill is a good place for students and parents." Students responded to the statement, "I think I will like Hampstead Hill" with a 3.3 average rating on a scale of 4.

The parents and students new to the school have high expectations that Hampstead will be a positive environment. Teachers' responses indicate that some positive trends in the school climate have occurred over the past two years, although there is still room for improvement. Orientation Days and similar activities may help Hampstead Hill continue to improve its school climate for teachers, parents, and students.

Recommendations To Improve Orientation Days

This section summarizes parent, student, and teacher recommendations on how to improve Orientation Days. Several reactions and suggestions reflect the disorganization that accompanies any new venture. The PIE Team will want to consider the ideas and suggestions from parents, students, and teachers in their plans for next year.

When Should Planning Begin? Some teachers commented on the need for more advanced notice and assistance in planning their participation in Orientation Days. Two teachers offered the following suggestions:

> Have administrators and other department heads better prepared for opening day.
>
> We should start our plans in May for that September.

When Should Parents be Notified? Most of the parents' critical comments indicated the need for advanced and clearer notice about Orientation Days:

> I think all parents should be notified ahead of time by letter and also told it will be an all day procedure.
>
> Next year if the 6th grade orientation is divided into 3 days, this should be indicated in a letter sent to parents.
>
> We did not receive a letter so it was kind of complicated when I found out we should spend the [whole] day.

Who Should Come and When? Teachers expressed disappointment that more parents did not come. They wrote: "I expected more parents and less students by themselves." Teachers met an average of 24 families of students they teach. However, some teachers met as many as 60, and others as few as two because many parents did not stay for the entire day.

About 30% of the parents stated that attending Orientation Days was something of a hardship for them. Some reported that they had to make special arrangements in order to attend:

> It was a very good day even though I was tired from working all night and not getting any sleep.
>
> It was hard for me to come because I work at night and want to be able to stay all day.
>
> Orientation should be held the last week in August. That way I wouldn't have to have my child home alone Tuesday and Thursday.

Although there was a good response from families to the first Orientation Days, the PIE Team and school staff may want to discuss how to improve the turnout.

Would it be possible, for example, to allow families to choose the day they will attend? This flexibility would probably increase attendance and enable parents to attend on a day that is convenient. This could be done by assigning parents to a day but allowing those who need to change that date to do so by calling the school or noting the change on a form.

Would it be possible to conduct orientation on two days (instead of three) by inviting half the students and families each day? Might one of the Orientation Days be held in the late afternoon and evening or a Saturday morning?

Another question to consider is: Should *all* students attend one or all of the Orientation Days, whether or not they come with a parent or other adult?

One state (Vermont) is considering requiring all parents to come with their children to formally enroll them in the middle grades school. This meeting time could incorporate an Orientation Days program.

How long should the program be? Students' negative comments tended to address the length of the day and the number and length of the speeches in the auditorium.

Students wrote: "The only thing I didn't like is that there were to much talking." "I don't like sitting in the auditorium all morning. BORING."

Parents wrote: "It was fine but too long. It should have been 1/2 day project." "Shorten the day about 8:30-12:30."

Over the three Orientation Days, the procedures for welcoming and guiding students and parents became more efficient. For instance, it was found that by

greeting parents and students *before* they entered the auditorium, the staff could determine if the students were listed on the computer printout roster and assist those who were not yet listed This enabled the rest of the students and their parents to follow the program without waiting unnecessarily.

What should the program include? Because some parents leave early, the PIE Team and school staff may want to discuss which information has the highest priority and should be presented early in the day. For example, on two days the *Student Handbooks* were distributed in the morning in order to ensure that parents who left early would receive them. As another example, it might save time to introduce all members of the staff (e.g., the counselors, librarian, nurse, custodian) in the morning. One parent commented:

> Teachers -- although covering some of same material -- were all very informative and in control. However, I did not think it was very organized in the auditorium.

Fewer than a third of the parents attended presentations in "elective" subjects, so some re-scheduling may be needed to increase attendance. One teacher commented: "Try to work in the [elective] subjects in a different manner."

A few students and parents (3% and 6%, respectively) commented about the cafeteria cuisine, the brief amount of time for lunch, and the high price: "Don't have a lot of time for lunch." "I think the lunch was overpriced." "...lunch should have been free for parents or cheaper."

Other special concerns. One parent requested that some time during Orientation should be set aside for parents to see the school counselor about special problems. This might be a time to arrange for periodic consultation by phone or in person.

Although most parents signed an attendance sheet, some did not. The "true" number of families represented is not known, nor is the "true" number of students who attended with or without family members. The attendance at the first Orientation Days -- of over one third of the sixth graders' families -- is a "guesstimate" based on sign-in sheets and parent and student survey returns. A more accurate count can be obtained by asking family members to sign in as they enter the auditorium in the morning, by checking for other attenders in the classrooms, and at the end of the day.

How should evaluation forms be distributed? Some parents left the school before the questionnaires were distributed. Thus, not all parents who attended provided reactions to the program. Teachers observed that some substitute teachers did not distribute questionnaires to parents and students. Evaluation forms could be given to parents in the opening session with instructions to complete them before leaving the building, with occasional reminders to return them. Drop off boxes could be placed at key points. Or, evaluation forms could be collected once in a class period late in the day and once at the group meeting at the end of the day.

The PIE Team (or other teachers) may use the same evaluation forms (Appendices A, B, and C) or adapt them in the future to address new questions they have about Orientation Days.

How Should the School Contact Parents Who Did Not Attend? If parents did not come to Orientation Days, it does not mean that they do not care about their children's education. Rather, some may not have received the letter soon enough to adjust their schedules to meet their work or other obligations. Some may not have received the letters at all. In an earlier survey of Hampstead Hill parents, 52% selected evenings as the time they can come to school and 70% worked full or part time, most during the school day. Given this, the attendance at Orientation Days was very good. However, those who could not come still need information to help their children succeed at Hampstead Hill.

It is important to develop ways to communicate important information about school policies, expectations, and curriculum to all parents, including those who could not attend Orientation Days. Teachers suggested ways to provide information to parents who were not able to attend. Some indicated that more than one strategy was needed.

> Call parents and send letters.
>
> A door-to-door visitation would seem most effective since some parents have no phone and seem to ignore their mail.
>
> Handbooks [should be] given out.
>
> I plan to send my information sheets home with the students on Friday.
>
> Send parents packets about Orientation events through the mail or a bulletin.
>
> Perhaps another day similar to these three.
>
> Students whose parents did not accompany them should be invited to do so on a specific day such as an administrative staff Monday so that teachers can inform them of student expectations and assistance they can give.

In reviewing Orientation Days, the PIE Team and other teachers might consider how to convey a warm

welcome to parents who could not come to the school and ways to provide other key information on how to contact the Hampstead Hill staff and who to contact for particular questions.

How Should Teachers Continue to Communicate with Parents? Parents were asked about other questions they have about Hampstead Hill. Several parents wanted to know about the PTA and its meetings, coaching classes for students who need more help with a subject, computer skills, lockers, and how to help their child do well in school. The Hampstead Hill PIE Team and teachers may want to address parents' questions in a school newsletter or other communications on a regular basis.

Parents also report that they want information about how to monitor and help their children with many subjects throughout the year. The PIE Team and teachers may want to consider ways that teachers of each subject can keep parents informed and involved on a regular basis, so that parents continue to feel comfortable and knowledgeable about their influence in their children's education. One suggestion for consideration is that each teacher design at least one homework assignment each month that requires children to talk to someone at home about their homework as in the Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) process.

How Could the Program be Expanded? Orientation Days is part of a program to ease the transition to a new school. Hampstead Hill receives students from many schools, including five main feeder elementary schools. Other practices for successful articulation between elementary and middle schools could be pursued, such as the transition of eighth graders from Hampstead Hill to their high schools.

The PIE Team will not be able to take every suggestion offered, but will want to decide on some that will strengthen the program and the concept of Orientation Days for new students and their families.

Conclusion

Was Orientation a success? Did it acquaint parents and students with the school's expectations? With the school staff? With the curriculum? Parents, students, and teachers gave the program high marks and agreed it should be repeated. By the second day of Orientation, teachers were commenting on how to improve the program for the future.

The first Hampstead Hill Orientation Days fulfilled its purposes well. Orientation Days were attended by families of all educational backgrounds and those who were new as well as familiar to the school. It offered information at the critical time of the students' and families' transition to the school. It relieved students' and families' anxieties about being in a new school; introduced them to the teachers and staff; familiarized them with the physical and social setting of the school; helped teachers recognize the connections they can successfully make with parents; and helped students, parents, and teachers better understand their work for the new year.

Appendix A -- Results from Parents

Hampstead Hill Parents Involved in Education Orientation Day Reaction Sheet (N = 101 Parents)

---

1. Please tell us your feelings about Orientation Day.
   (Circle one choice on each line...)

	What Do You Think? % of Parents Who...				
	AGREE A LOT	Agree	Disagree	DISAGREE A LOT	N*
My child wanted me to come today.	74.2	21.6	2.1	2.1	97
I will be able to help my child at home on schoolwork.	76.0	24.0	--	--	96
I feel welcome at this school.	67.4	30.5	2.1	--	95
It was hard for me to take the time to come today.	14.4	15.6	35.6	34.4	90
I know more about Hampstead Hill now than I did yesterday.	45.8	40.6	12.5	1.0	96
I know how the teachers want my child to behave in school.	75.8	24.2	--	--	99
The school is a good place for students and for parents.	60.2	38.8	1.0	--	98

2. Overall, Orientation Day was: (N=96)

   44.8% Excellent
   42.7% Good
   11.5% OK
   1.0% A waste of time

3. What SUBJECTS do you want more information about to help your child this year? (N=86)

   72.1% Math
   66.3% English
   40.7% Science
   39.5% Social Studies
   68.6% Reading
   27.9% Learning Activities for the Summer
   10.5% Other (describe)_____

* N = Number of parents responding when fewer than 101.

4. How much did you learn about what your child will do this year in each subject?

How Much Information Did You Get?

% of Parents Saying ....

	A lot	Some	A little	Not much	N
Math	50.0	36.5	9.5	4.1	74
English	56.8	33.3	6.2	3.7	81
Reading	66.7	28.0	2.7	2.7	75
Social Studies	60.8	27.5	7.8	3.9	51
Science	72.7	21.8	1.8	3.6	55
Health Education	41.0	38.5	12.8	7.7	39
Physical Education	58.1	25.8	9.7	6.5	31
Industrial Arts	50.0	33.3	16.7	--	18
Business Education	53.8	41.0	5.1	--	39
Art	63.3	30.0	6.7	--	30
Music	42.9	50.0	7.1	--	14

5. Do you have any other comments or suggestions about Orientation Day?

No comment: 65.3%
One Comment: 23.8%
Two+ Comments: 10.9%
(N=101)

Negative: 22.9%
Positive: 51.4%
Both (pos+neg): 25.7%
(N=35)

General: 34.3%
Schedule: 31.4%
Curriculum: 17.1%
Lunch: 5.7%
(N=35)

6. What else do you want to know about Hampstead Hill?

No requests: 83.2%
1 Request: 13.9%
2+ Requests: 3.0%
(N=101)

Curriculum: 35.3%
Lockers: 17.6%
Discipline: 5.9%
Supplies: 5.9%
(N=17)

7. What is your education?

24.5% did not complete high school
49.0% completed high school
26.5% beyond high school
(N=98)

8. Do you work at home or outside the home?

58.7% Full-time job
10.9% Part-time job
30.4% Work at home
(N=92)

9. How many of your children went to Hampstead Hill BEFORE this year? (Circle one) N=98

NONE	1	2	3	4	5 or more
58.2%	22.4%	16.3%	2.0%	--	1.0%

10. How many of your children go to Hampstead Hill NOW? (N=98)

NONE*	1	2	3	4	5 or more
5.1%	84.7%	9.2%	--	1.0%	--

11. Which school did your 6th Grader attend LAST YEAR?

10% or more: SCHOOL # 27, 83, 101, 215
Less than 10%: SCHOOL # 13, 23, 25, 26, 36, 47, 54, 85, 102, 231, 237, 243

* Some children came with adults who were not their parents.

Hampstead Hill Parents Involved in Education Orientation Day Reaction Sheet

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Please take a few minutes to give us your ideas about Orientation Day. Thank you very much.

Mr. Preston Roney, Principal, and
The P. I. E. Team

---

1. Please tell us your feelings about Orientation Day.
(Circle one choice on each line...)

	What Do You Think?			
	AGREE A LOT	Agree	Disagree	DISAGREE A LOT
My child wanted me to come today.	AGREE	Agree	Disagree	DISAGREE
I will be able to help my child at home on schoolwork.	AGREE	Agree	Disagree	DISAGREE
I feel welcome at this school.	AGREE	Agree	Disagree	DISAGREE
It was hard for me to take the time to come today.	AGREE	Agree	Disagree	DISAGREE
I know more about Hampstead Hill now than I did yesterday.	AGREE	Agree	Disagree	DISAGREE
I know how the teachers want my child to behave in school.	AGREE	Agree	Disagree	DISAGREE
The school is a good place for students and for parents.	AGREE	Agree	Disagree	DISAGREE

2. Overall, Orientation Day was: (Check one...)

_____Excellent
_____Good
_____OK
_____A waste of time

3. What SUBJECTS do you want more information about to help your child this year?
(CHECK all that apply...)

_____Math
_____English
_____Science
_____Social Studies
_____Reading
_____Learning Activities for the Summer
_____Other (describe)_____

4. How much did you learn about what your child will do this year in each subject?
(Circle one choice on each line...)

	How Much Information Did You Get?				
Math	A lot	Some	A little	Not much	Did not attend
English	A lot	Some	A little	Not much	Did not attend
Reading	A lot	Some	A little	Not much	Did not attend
Social Studies	A lot	Some	A little	Not much	Did not attend
Science	A lot	Some	A little	Not much	Did not attend
Health Education	A lot	Some	A little	Not much	Did not attend
Physical Education	A lot	Some	A little	Not much	Did not attend
Industrial Arts	A lot	Some	A little	Not much	Did not attend
Business Education	A lot	Some	A little	Not much	Did not attend
Art	A lot	Some	A little	Not much	Did not attend
Music	A lot	Some	A little	Not much	Did not attend

5. Do you have any other comments or suggestions about Orientation Day?

_____

_____

6. What else do you want to know about Hampstead Hill? _____

_____

7. What is your education? Check one ...

_____did not complete high school
_____completed high school
_____beyond high school

8. Do you work at home or outside the home? Check one ...

_____Full-time job
_____Part-time job
_____Work at home

9. How many of your children went to Hampstead Hill BEFORE this year? (Circle one)

NONE 1 2 3 4 5 or more

10. How many of your children go to Hampstead Hill NOW? (Circle one)

NONE 1 2 3 4 5 or more

11. Which school did your 6th Grader attend LAST YEAR? _____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!

Appendix B -- Results from Students

Hampstead Hill Parents Involved in Education Orientation Day Reaction Sheet (N = 321 Students)

---

1. Did a parent or another adult come with you? (Check who came) (N=314)

36.6% I came by myself

I came with:

42.4% Mother
7.0% Father
1.9% Grandmother
-- Grandfather
7.3% Other relative
2.5% Other adult
2.2% More than one relative

2. Did you like the things that happened today? (Circle ONE choice on each line)

	% of Students Who...			
	Liked A lot	**Liked A little**	**Not at All**	**N***
Meeting my teachers	65.2	31.0	3.9	310
Learning about school work	61.8	33.6	4.7	301
Meeting the other students	58.8	37.4	3.7	294
Having parents come to learn about the school	55.3	31.4	13.3	293

3. Overall, Orientation Day was: (N=313)

28.8% Excellent
28.1% Good
40.3% OK
2.9% A waste of time

* N = Number of students responding if fewer than 321.

4. What did you think of Orientation Day? (Circle one on each line ...)

What Do You Think?

	% of Students Saying... VERY TRUE	Mostly true	Mostly false	VERY FALSE	N
I wanted someone from home to come with me today.	50.8	19.4	17.5	12.3	309
Parents are welcome at this school.	79.9	17.1	2.3	.7	299
I would have liked regular school days better than Orientation Day.	27.7	21.5	25.4	25.4	307
When I have a question about homework, I ask a parent to help me.	55.9	31.3	9.2	3.6	304
The school should have Orientation Days again next year.	52.8	27.9	11.1	8.2	305

5. What did you LIKE or NOT LIKE about Orientation Day?

No comment: 29.9%
1 comment: 57.3%
2+ comments: 12.8%
(N=321)

Negative: 25.6%
Positive: 67.3%
Both: 7.1%
(N=211)

Meeting teachers: 27.4%
General: 22.4%
Scheduling: 17.9%
Schoolwork: 10.8%
(N=223)

6. How do you feel about school, most of the time? (Circle ONE choice on each line)

	% of Students Saying... VERY TRUE	Mostly True	Mostly False	VERY FALSE	N
I like school.	46.4	39.1	9.5	4.9	304
Schoolwork is dull and boring to me.	06.7	22.6	33.7	37.0	297
I think I will like Hampstead Hill.	52.0	36.0	6.3	5.7	300
I would like to go to college.	67.2	21.6	4.7	6.4	296

7. In most classes I am ...(Check one.) (N=306)

14.7% A Top Student
45.8% A Good Student
17.6% An Average Student
20.3% A Fair Student
1.6% A Poor Student

8. Which school(#) did you attend LAST YEAR?

10% or more: 13, 27, 83, 101, 215
Less than 10%: 8, 19, 22, 23, 25, 30, 36, 43, 47, 54, 82, 85, 97, 102, 122, 230, 231, 237, 243, 246, 250.

Hampstead Hill Parents Involved in Education Orientation Day Reaction Sheet

Dear Student:

Welcome to Hampstead Hill! Please take a few minutes to give us your ideas about Orientation Day. Thank you very much.

Mr. Preston Roney, Principal,
The P. I. E. Team, and Your Teachers

---

1. Did a parent or another adult come with you? (Check who came)

____ I came by myself

I came with:

_____Mother
_____Father
_____Grandmother
_____Grandfather
_____Other relative
_____Other adult

2. Did you like the things that happened today? (Circle ONE choice on each line)

	Liked A lot	**Liked A little**	**Not at All**
Meeting my teachers	A lot	A little	Not at all
Learning about school work	A lot	A little	Not at all
Meeting the other students	A lot	A little	Not at all
Having parents come to learn about the school	A lot	A little	Not at all

3. Overall, Orientation Day was: (Check one)

_____Excellent
_____Good
_____OK
_____A waste of time

<< OVER >>

4. What did you think of Orientation Day? (Circle one on each line ...)

	What Do You Think?			
	VERY TRUE	**Mostly true**	**Mostly false**	**VERY FALSE**
I wanted someone from home to come with me today.	TRUE	true	false	FALSE
Parents are welcome at this school.	TRUE	true	false	FALSE
I would have liked regular school days better than Orientation Day.	TRUE	true	false	FALSE
When I have a question about homework, I ask a parent to help me.	TRUE	true	false	FALSE
The school should have Orientation Days again next year.	TRUE	true	false	FALSE

5. What did you LIKE or NOT LIKE about Orientation Day?_____

_____ _____

6. How do you feel about school, most of the time? (Circle ONE choice on each line)

	VERY TRUE	**Mostly True**	**Mostly False**	**VERY FALSE**
I like school.	TRUE	true	false	FALSE
Schoolwork is dull and boring to me.	TRUE	true	false	FALSE
I think I will like Hampstead Hill.	TRUE	true	false	FALSE
I would like to go to college.	TRUE	true	false	FALSE

7. In most classes I am ... (Check one...)

_____ A Top Student
_____ A Good Student
_____ An Average Student
_____ A Fair Student
_____ A Poor Student

8. Which school did you attend LAST YEAR? _____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!

Appendix C -- Results From Teachers

Hampstead Hill Parents Involved in Education Orientation Days Reaction Sheet (N=20 Teachers)

---

1. Please indicate how you feel about Orientation Days. (Circle one on each line...)

	What Do You Think? % of Teachers Who...				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N
Parents felt welcome on Orientation Days.	--	--	40	60	
Students felt good about their parents coming for Orientation.	--	5	75	20	
It was hard for me to prepare for Orientation Days.	40	50	5	5	
Orientation Days disrupted my teaching plans.	45	50	5	--	
Parents usually feel welcome at this school.	--	11.1	72.2	16.7	1
The school should have Orientation Days again next year.	--	--	30	70	
Orientation Days should be held for all grades, not just grade 6.	10	40	25	25	
Compared to other schools, this school has one of the best climates for teachers, students, and parents.	6.3	37.5	56.3	--	1

2. Overall, Orientation Days was: (Check one)

10% Excellent
80% Good
10% OK
-- A waste of time

3. How helpful was Orientation Days? % of Teachers Reporting ...

	Very Helpful	Quite Helpful	A Little Helpful	Not at All Helpful	N
- How helpful to Parents? ...	50.0	44.4	5.6	--	18
- How helpful to Teachers? ...	45.0%	45.0%	10.0%	--	20
- How helpful to Students? ...	47.4%	47.4%	5.3%	--	19

* N = Number of teachers responding when less than 20.

4. From your meetings with parents on the **3 Orientation Days**, how much do you agree with the following? (Circle ONE choice on each line.)

Because of Orientation Days...	% of Teachers Who... Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N
More parents know what skills their children will learn	--	5	60	35	
More parents know what supplies their children need for school	--	--	35	65	
More parents know how to support the teacher's discipline policies	--	5	60	35	
More parents will be able to help their children with homework	--	5	60	35	
More parents will volunteer to help at school	--	30	60	10	
More teachers will involve parents in children's learning activities this year	--	15.8	73.7	10.5	19

5. About how many different **sixth grade** students do you teach each day?

Mean = 110 students Median = 116 students Mode = 60 families

6. Over the three days, about how many of your students' families came to Orientation Days?

Mean = 23.5 families Median = 14 families Mode = 36 families

7. How long have you taught, including this year?

Average=11.7 years taught Hampstead Hill
(s.d. = 11.2)

Average=17.7 TOTAL years taught
(s.d. = 9.8)

8. What grade 6 subject(s) do you teach? (List all that apply)

Teachers taught many subjects including: Math, English, Science, Social Studies, Phys. Ed., Bus. Ed./Computer, Ind. Arts, Home Ec., Art, Spec. Ed.

9. What aspect of Orientation Days surprised you the most?

No comment: 35%
1 comment: 40%
2+ comments: 25%
(N=20)

Negative: 46.2%
Neutral: 38.5%
Positive: 15.4%
(N=13)

About parents: 69.2%
About scheduling: 7.7%
Other topics: 23.1%
(N=13)

10. Do you have any suggestions for getting your information to families who DID NOT ATTEND Orientation Days? (N=20)

No Comment: 20% One comment: 45% Two+ comments: 35%

11. Do you have any other comments or suggestions about Orientation Days?

No comment: 55%
1 comment: 15%
2+ comments:30%
(N=20)

Negative: 11.1%
Neutral: 11.1%
Positive: 44.4%
Both: 33.3%
(N=9)

Hampstead Hill Parents Involved in Education Orientation Days Reaction Sheet

Dear Teachers:

Please take a few minutes to give us your reactions to Orientation Days. We will use your ideas to plan future projects. Thank you very much.

Mr. Preston Roney, Principal
and the P.I.E. Team

---

1. Please indicate how you feel about Orientation Days. (Circle one on each line...)

What Do You Think?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Parents felt welcome on Orientation Days.	SD	D	A	SA
Students felt good about their parents coming for Orientation.	SD	D	A	SA
It was hard for me to prepare for Orientation Days.	SD	D	A	SA
Orientation Days disrupted my teaching plans.	SD	D	A	SA
Parents usually feel welcome at this school.	SD	D	A	SA
The school should have Orientation Days again next year.	SD	D	A	SA
Orientation Days should be held for all grades, not just grade 6.	SD	D	A	SA
Compared to other schools, this school has one of the best climates for teachers, students, and parents.	SD	D	A	SA

2. Overall, Orientation Days was: (Check one)

_____Excellent
_____Good
_____OK
_____A waste of time

3. How helpful was Orientation Days?

	Very Helpful	Quite Helpful	A Little Helpful	Not at All Helpful
- How helpful to Parents? ...	_____	_____	_____	_____
- How helpful to Teachers? ...	_____	_____	_____	_____
- How helpful to Students? ...	_____	_____	_____	_____

4. From your meetings with parents on the **3 Orientation Days,** how much do you agree with the following? (Circle ONE choice on each line.)

Because of Orientation Days...	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
More parents know what skills their children will learn	1	2	3	4
More parents know what supplies their children need for school	1	2	3	4
More parents know how to support the teacher's discipline policies	1	2	3	4
More parents will be able to help their children with homework	1	2	3	4
More parents will volunteer to help at school	1	2	3	4
More teachers will involve parents in children's learning activities this year	1	2	3	4

5. About how many different **sixth grade** students do you teach each day? _____ students

6. Over the three days, about how many of your students' families came to Orientation Days?

_____ families of my students

7. How long have you taught, including this year? _____Years taught HERE at Hampstead Hill
_____TOTAL years taught

8. What grade 6 subject(s) do you teach? (List all that apply)

_____

9. What aspect of Orientation Days surprised you the most? _____

_____

10. Do you have any suggestions for getting your information to families who DID NOT ATTEND Orientation Days?

_____

_____

11. Do you have any other comments or suggestions about Orientation Days?

_____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!

Reactions of Parents to School Newsletters in the Middle Grades

Joyce L. Epstein and Susan C. Herrick

Introduction

The Parent and Teachers (P.A.T.) Project at Booker T. Washington Middle School had several goals for the 1989-1990 academic year: To hold a series of workshops for parents on how to help their youngsters at home and on how to cope with various problems that parents identified in an earlier survey conducted by the school; and to provide parents who cannot attend workshops with summary information.

One project designed to help meet these goals is the P.A.T. Newsletter. The Newsletter was initiated to make parents feel welcome at the school and to summarize key information about school programs and workshops held at the school for parents who did not attend.

The Team's plans included an evaluation of the P.A.T. Newsletter consisting of a telephone survey of a random sample of all families in order to reach parents who might not ordinarily communicate with the school. This report summarizes the results of the evaluation and their implications for continuing and improving the Newsletter and the P.A.T. program.

The Parent Telephone Survey

The P.A.T. Project Director of Booker T. Washington Middle School met with staff from The Johns Hopkins University and the Fund for Educational Excellence to plan an evaluation of the P.A.T. Newsletter. A telephone survey was designed to obtain reactions to the Newsletter from a representative sample of parents. (The Interview Schedule appears as Appendix A.)

A telephone survey has the advantage of being a person-to-person structured interview in which the interviewer can rephrase questions in order to clarify meanings. The person being interviewed may be motivated to answer questions that s/he would leave blank on a questionnaire if s/he is not good at written expression or because of time constraints. One of the disadvantages of the telephone interview is that a conversation with an interviewer who represents the school may induce parents to give socially acceptable answers to a greater degree than if they were writing their answers anonymously on a questionnaire. Interpretations of telephone survey results must take this limitation into account.

Obtaining a Sample

From a school roster of 694 students, 100 households were selected at random with replacement for unusable telephone numbers. Many of the telephone numbers in the original list had been disconnected, changed to non-published numbers, were numbers of businesses that could not identify a parent with a child at the school, or were numbers of households having no association whatsoever with the school. In a small proportion of instances, some parents (n=9) refused to participate for various reasons not ascertained. The interviewers asked to speak with the person most knowledgeable about the school. After two weeks of intense telephoning, seventy interviews were completed, for a total of 10% of the families of the school population.

In order to obtain the sample of 70 families, 320 telephone numbers were tried. Although 34% of the final sample was reached on the first try, 29% required two calls; 21% required three or four calls; and 16% required five to nine tries. Despite these difficulties, the sample was representative of the households of the student population. Families from various situations were included and not just those who typically participate in written surveys.

Interviews were conducted from May 15th to May 30th 1990 by five interviewers. Calls were made between 9 AM and 8 PM (unless parents requested later callbacks), Monday through Saturday. The length of the interviews ranged from five minutes to 25 minutes, and averaged about 14 minutes.

The Parent Telephone Survey consisted of 30 questions that asked parents for 123 items of information, including opinions, experiences, comments about the Newsletter, and how they obtained information about the school and their children's classes.

When asked about whether they had questions about the survey, nearly twenty percent (19%) of the parents made comments.* Some parents were concerned about confidentiality and who was conducting the survey. One parent wanted a summary of the results. Several parents expressed appreciation that the school was interested in what parents had to say. Two parents commented:

> ...It's a very nice thing to do -- to ask parents in order to help the school. You might get some parents to help their kids or to volunteer.
>
> They should have done this sooner.

* All comments throughout this report are in the parents' own words.

Survey Results

The reactions to the P.A.T. Newsletter may be useful to Booker T.'s P.A.T. Team and other teachers in planning future programs to involve parents. Results of the Telephone Parent Survey appear in Appendix B.

Participants

In order to obtain a profile of the parents who participated, the respondents were asked to identify their relationship to the child attending Booker T. (e.g., mother, father, grandmother), their employment, and other training. Parents also provided information about what grades their children were in, and their children's success in and attitudes toward the school.

Parent Profile. The interviewer asked to speak with the person most knowledgeable about the school. Not surprisingly, 76% of the respondents were mothers; 11% were fathers; and 12.9% were grandmothers, aunts, an uncle, and others.

Thirty-one percent (31%) of the parents completed high school; 28% had some college, including four mothers who completed college. Although 41% of the sample did not complete high school, most (57%) had additional educational training, such as the G.E.D., Manpower Corps, computer or secretarial training, or military service.

Nearly half (46%) of the parents interviewed worked full-time outside the home; 16% worked part-time; and 38% did not work outside the home.

Student Profile. The 70 families had a total of 81 children enrolled at Booker T. Most (86%) of the families had one child enrolled at the time of the interview; 13% had two children enrolled; and one family had three children enrolled at the school.

The children were from all three grades, but more attended grade 7: 26% were in sixth grade; 47% in seventh grade; 26% in eighth grade; one child attended special classes.

Parents who had more than one child enrolled at Booker T. were asked to answer questions in terms of the child in the highest grade. (For example, a mother of a sixth and a seventh grader would answer questions about the seventh grader's academic standing and attitude toward school.) The distribution of children in the highest grade was 20% in sixth, 50% in seventh, and 30% in eighth grade.

Parents' ratings of the academic standing of their children in the highest grade ranged from top to average to poor. Of the parents interviewed, 7% rated their children as excellent students; 30% said their children are good students; 30% reported their children as average; 22% rated their children as fair; and 10% said their children are poor students.

Parents were asked how their children in the highest grade liked school. Results indicated that 59% of the students like school "a lot"; 26% like it "some"; 9% like it "a little"; and 6% "not at all."

Two Newsletters

The main focus of the survey was to evaluate the P.A.T. Newsletter, but the school also distributes a second newsletter from the principal's office. To distinguish between the two newsletters, parents were asked, "Are you aware that Booker T. has *two* newsletters?" If further clarification was needed, parents were asked if they knew about the "one-to-two page School Newsletter on long paper" as well as "the smaller booklet called the P.A.T. Newsletter?" About 46% of the families interviewed were not aware of either newsletter; 17% were aware of the school newsletter only; 12% were aware of the P.A.T. Newsletter only; and 25% were aware of both.

Parents who were aware of both newsletters were more likely to work full- or part-time and have children in the eighth grade. Those aware of both newsletters also were more likely to report receiving information about many more school programs than parents who were not aware of either newsletter or aware of only one. However, parents who were aware of or received both newsletters were not more likely than other parents to know what their children are learning *in class*.

The School Newsletter

The Booker T. Washington Middle School Newsletter issued by the principal was published three times in the academic year -- in September, February, and May. The September and February issues contained messages from the principal encouraging parents to work together with the school and to volunteer at the school if possible. These two issues presented information on the school's mental health counseling program called "Project Succeed." Each newsletter announced "Important Dates for the Quarter," special events and/or activities that classes or grades were involved in, and emphasized the importance of good attendance. Winners of contests and special achievements also were mentioned.

Less than half (42%) of all the parents interviewed were aware of the School Newsletter. Thirty percent

(30%) of parents of sixth grade students, 26% of parents of seventh graders, and 62% of parents of eighth graders received the School Newsletter. Most (78%) who received it said it was "very good" and a smaller proportion (19%) rated it as "just ok". Nearly all agreed the School Newsletter was easy or somewhat easy to read (93%) and informative or somewhat informative (96%).

The P.A.T. Newsletter

The P.A.T. Newsletter was published in booklet form three times during the academic year -- in October, December, and March. Each issue of the P.A.T. Newsletter began with a short paragraph describing the goals of the Parents and Teachers Project: To sponsor workshops, increase volunteers, and provide a way for teachers to communicate with parents.

Throughout the year, the Team Project Director solicited articles and announcements from teachers for publication. For example, features entitled, "October's Educational Scene" reported on class projects, and "Newsworthy Happenings in Class" highlighted students' achievements.

The P.A.T. Team's goal was to reach all families, but about two-thirds of the parents interviewed said they had not received a P.A.T. Newsletter. Of the families who had received them, most (70%) reported seeing only one or two issues; 17% received three; and 13% received four or more, presumably duplicate copies delivered to families with more than one child enrolled at the school.

For the third of the parents interviewed who had received a P.A.T. Newsletter, 74% reported they read all or most of the P.A.T. Newsletters that their children brought home. About 39% reported other family members also read the P.A.T. Newsletter. Although fathers, grandmothers, aunts, and uncles were mentioned in a few instances, the largest readership category consists of mothers, students at Booker T., and their siblings.

Significantly, sixty-one percent (61%) of the parents who received a P.A.T. Newsletter said that they read about a teacher or a child they knew or about activities in their children's grade level in the Newsletters. Parents receiving more Newsletters also reported reading about someone they knew. Seeing a familiar name may encourage students to bring home the Newsletter and encourage their families to read it.

What Did Parents Think of the P.A.T. Newsletter? Overall, of the third of the Booker T. families interviewed who received the Newsletter, 14% said it is "excellent"; 32% reported the P.A.T. Newsletter is "pretty enjoyable"; 50% "just ok"; and 5% (one parent) said it is "boring."

Recipients were asked to identify the features they liked most. Parents noted their preferences:

> What's happening in children's classrooms.
>
> Workshops are good.
>
> The ones that ... focused on the neighborhood and the community's relationship to the school.
>
> About the children's grades ... [about] pregnancy prevention. That they can be on honor roll three times.
>
> ...what they expected of the students. I liked the advice given at testing time about promptness and having a good breakfast.

During an interview, one parent looking at a copy of the Newsletter, said: "There are so many parts, I like it a lot."

Did the P.A.T. Newsletter Make a Difference? Two of the goals of the P.A.T. Newsletter were to provide parents who could not attend workshops held at the school with a summary of information from the workshops, and to keep parents up to date on school programs.

Only 11% of all parents interviewed had attended a workshop. Interestingly, parents with less education were more likely to attend. Despite the low attendance rate, 43% had received information about the workshops through the Newsletters, their children, other parents, or neighbors. More parents reported they learned about workshops from a Newsletter (24%) or from their children (21%) than any other means.

Parents were asked if they had received information from the school about each of ten school programs and workshop topics (listed in Table 1). The question was phrased in general terms and not linked to the newsletters in order to determine whether parents who had received either the P.A.T. Newsletter or the School Newsletter or both were better informed.

Parents who received the P.A.T. Newsletter were significantly more likely than other parents to know about the programs -- especially Teen Pregnancy Prevention, the Yearbook, Champions of Courage, and the Workshops -- as shown in Table 1. Both recipients and non-recipients had relatively little knowledge of Jobs for Parents -- a workshop that was summarized in one issue of the Newsletter.

The P.A.T. Newsletter clearly made a difference to those who received it. Results suggest:

Table 1

% Parent Recipients and Non-Recipients Who Received Information about School Programs

School Program	Non-Recipients (n=46*)	Recipients (n=23)
Pregnancy Prevention	24%	48%
Project DARE	37%	52%
School Yearbook	41%	74%
Jobs for Parents	22%	26%
Homework Helps	41%	56%
Champions of Courage Writing Contest	24%	52%
Coaching Classes	56%	65%
Volunteers	42%	50%
Student Awards	58%	78%
Workshops	29%	57%

* For the last three programs, percentages are based on n=45.

- The more parents read and liked the P.A.T. Newsletter, the more they reported knowing what's going on at school *and* in their children's classes.

- Parents of more successful students and students who like school were more likely to receive more P.A.T. Newsletters delivered by the children, to like the Newsletter, and to know what's going on at school and in their children's classes.

Overall, for the third of the parents who received it, the P.A.T. Newsletter increased their information about school programs. Thus, the P.A.T. and School Newsletters are worth improving to reach more parents of children at all grade levels.

Room for Improvement

Most recipients (82%) said the P.A.T. Newsletter is "just right" in length; 14% thought it was "too short"; 5% said "too long." However, 52% reported having some difficulty reading the print.

Parents were asked for their suggestions to improve the P.A.T. Newsletters. Those who had not received it were asked for their ideas for an "ideal" newsletter. All together, 74% of the 70 parents responded with comments and suggestions for ways to improve the physical appearance of the Newsletter, insure delivery, and increase student involvement. They suggested that students write articles for the Newsletter; that articles be included about students' achievements, the curriculum, class and grade projects, and extra-curricular student activities; that a calender of school events be included that would highlight upcoming meetings such as the PTA; and that articles be included about how parents can help their children at home.

The following are some of the parents' comments and suggestions for improving the Newsletter:

> It could be written more clearly - the way it is phrased. The copier machine makes letters crooked.

> It could be better. Print could be bigger and a little more clear.

> It needs embossing. It needs to catch the eye, but the [size of the] print is fine. It's the way it's organized on the page. If my child hadn't handed it to me I probably wouldn't have picked it up and read it.

> It could be more colorful. Add pictures.

> Just put in the really necessary things; get to the point.

> I like the booklet, but it should have more pages.

> I haven't been getting the Newsletter. We should have a way to get the information first because the students don't give it to us. It might cost them money [to mail it home], but it might be worth it.

> Since you mentioned them to me I'll make sure that my daughter brings more of them home.

> Send them with the report card!

> Allow the students a voice to get their point of view across. I would like to hear what the students have to say. I know that the school gives awards and certificates to the students. This should be published in the Newsletter so their names are in it and maybe the Newsletter could reach the outside world.

> The students should have their own newsletters and cartoons about what happens when you don't get your education.

> The Newsletter should include a feature where parents could make suggestions like letters to the editors.

> Maybe ask for more parents and students and community participation. Have a section on just students - what they're getting involved in. And one section for teachers.

A little section for *each* class. For example, "Class 7-1 did well on tests." It's a type of motivation and challenge for *each* class to do well on a certain goal. Rewards for students.

...The Newsletter should be a means for the students to communicate *with each other* - from different grades and classes. So they would know what is coming next so they wouldn't be afraid of moving up to the next grade. [This information could] help to motivate the students.... I notice that they have plays. Let the *whole* school know. The whole school should be involved. Not only come to the play but be involved and to feel part of it. Not just grade by grade or section by section.

A yearly or monthly calendar. If this were a constant thing to look for, parents would be more aware of what's going on.

School-Family Communication

Parents were asked how well they felt the school helped them know what is going on at the school and in their children's classes, and how they learn what is happening at school. These responses are from all parents whether they received Newsletters or not.

About 30% of the parents reported the school provides "a lot" of information; 31% reported receiving "some" information; 19% received only "a little"; and 20% said "not much" information was sent to them about school programs and activities. Over a third (36%) of the parents felt the school provided "a little" or "not much" information about what their children are learning *in class*. Some parents complained they did not receive information in time to plan for their children's involvement in school activities.

Dittos, teachers' notes, and phone calls were identified by one-fourth to one-third of the parents as the main ways they learned about what is happening at school. About 40% of the parents reported that their children tell them about school. Several (17%) spontaneously mentioned report cards as a major source of information. Fifty-one percent (51%) said that visiting the school was the single most effective way to learn what is happening in their children's classes. Some parents explained:

Only what my son brings home and through conferences. I have a problem not knowing about problems ahead of time *before* my child is suspended. He doesn't bring notes home.

Sometimes my daughter does not give me information. I think that's deliberate -- especially about parent-teacher communications.

Only if he tells me (My son doesn't live with me). If something is going on, then the teachers will call me. I've received phone calls from some of his teachers.

Some parents receive information from a variety of sources, but a large number receive little or no information either because it does not reach them, they cannot understand it, or it is not provided in a useful form.

What Parents Want to Know

Although the primary purpose of the telephone survey was to obtain parents' reactions to the Newsletter, most respondents took the opportunity to ask questions, give feedback, and express their ideas about school programs.

How to Help at Home. Parents were asked whether they wanted information about selected school subjects in order to help their children at home. Over 90% said they wanted more information about math and testing skills. At least 82% said they wanted more information about how to help their children at home with reading, science, and English; and 74% said they wanted more information about social studies. This was especially true of parents of seventh graders. Parents of eighth graders were most likely to ask about science and testing skills.

Table 2 compares 1990 results with parents' responses from a 1987 survey. There is a substantial increase in parents' requests for more information on how to help their children at home. This may mean that more parents need information but have not received it, more parents understand that they should be informed to help their children, and/or that the school has increased its efforts to encourage parents to become better informed.

Table 2
Percent of Parents Wanting Information About School Subjects

Subject	1987 Survey	1990 Survey
Testing skills	---	93%
Math	64%	90%
English	---	84%
Science	36%	84%
Reading	49%	82%
Current Events	20%	---
Social Studies	42%	74%

Additional Subjects and Academic Concerns. Parents were asked, "Are there any other subjects ... that you would like more

information about?" Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the parents mentioned they wanted information about foreign languages, Black history, vocational education, typing, computers, chemistry, physical education, art, and music. Parents expressed their desires for ways to help their children to improve study habits and writing skills, and for ways to deal with hygiene, sex and drug issues. Some of the parents' responses are instructive:

> Does Booker T. offer foreign languages anymore? I know they used to.

> No foreign language? Like French or Portuguese?

> How to make homework fun. You know you have to scream and holler about doing homework.

> I'd like to know how to improve the child's work habits.

> He needs help and I'd like a little information on how to help him spell better.

> How can a parent encourage reading at home to get them to *want* to read?

> I think they should have more writing skills. They should put more emphasis on the mechanics of writing because children are coming out of 12th grade and can't write. The reason I say this is because I had problems in college. I needed more preparation.

> Sex education so that I can help my child at home especially how to deal with peer pressure. A lot of her grades have dropped from 95% to 65%.

> Sex education and hygiene - just for girls and just for boys. Then put both groups together and then talk about babies having babies.

Other Questions and Comments

Parents were asked whether they had other questions about Booker T.'s programs. About 46% of the parents offered comments or asked questions. Some made general comments about how pleased they were with the school and teachers. Others expressed concerns.

> How did Booker T. come about? They should teach the history of the school. *That* students should know.

> My daughter is always on the honor roll and she's always getting prizes. And she's really improved since she's been up there at Booker T. She loves it and she done great. All the teachers up there are really nice. They really care for my daughter.

> My children received certificates for being present every day and they enjoyed school and they really loved it. How did the school do this? I'm very satisfied with school, the system, and everything.

> I would like to be well informed about the principal's intention to improve education.

Many parents expressed the need for more academic skill development and help with homework after school. Others asked about extra-curricular activities, summer programs, school uniforms, and expressed other concerns.

> Extracurricular activities, youth programs for cognitive development. People in the school office gave me a bulletin listing the programs but they couldn't tell me anything about them, except for the YMCA program that meets in the building.

> It's good to have a "Magic Me" program and the YMCA in the basement but it 's not academics.

> The after-school program - the teachers aren't there! He's unable to get make-up work. [By contrast], my younger boy is in DEC [special education] and his teachers are responsible.

> Will they have another program on teen pregnancy? Honor society or club so she can be with other good students.

> Do they have any summer camps and summer school?

> I did get a letter about a summer program, is that for special students? How long is it for?

> Summer job program for students - does a child have to have high grades or be a certain age?

> Are the uniforms mandatory or not? The school tells you you have to have them. Then, little by little, the children say they don't have to wear them. [Are there times when] they don't have to wear them? Information on the graduation exercises.

What school they'll send the children to after graduation.

More workshops. They always have 'em at 6 o'clock. We could come at 1 or 2 during our lunch break.

About the Staff

Many parents want to know more about the counselors and the teachers -- their goals and expectations for the students.

...I think a lot of parents need to know who the school counselors are and when they are available to the students.

[The Newsletter should publish] the phone numbers of different persons (like counselors). Better communication with the school.

I would like to know more about the teachers -- their background, what they have achieved -- so I can feel comfortable about my child having that teacher.

Information From Parents For The School

Parents expressed gratitude that the school was interested in what they had to say. The parents' comments indicate a real desire to communicate with the school to explain their ideas for expanding and improving school programs:

When they do have programs or need money, a lot of activities involve too much money. They ask them to wear a black jacket or white shirt. But the kids are excluded because they don't have these things. It's not what you wear but it's who you *are* and *that* you participate.

I'm worried about the children going to and from school. We need more on-foot policemen and patrols of the neighborhood, more police presence....

I think there's too many distractions over there. There seems to be more control there this year than last year, but it still could be better. A lot of teachers are absent and the students don't learn with substitutes.

When I went to the school to ask about coaching, the teachers agreed to do this. He stayed one day after school. The teachers said they didn't have time. The teachers said that the boy didn't follow instructions. The school doesn't take control.

Workshops or information for single parents to better cope with their kids.

I'm a single mother. My son is 14 years old. I went to the school for help. They have a counselor at the school. They told me if he didn't want to go [to school], you can't make him go. Teachers don't have patience with the children who are going through a change of life (puberty). I know he [could] do well at Booker T. They got all the problem children in one class. How can a teacher cope with this? The teachers are overwhelmed.

If a child misbehaves -- especially if it's not that bad -- they should do more talking with the child and with the parents over the phone concerning their behavior, instead of being so quick to send him home for *3 days* so that he's missing a lot of school.

When I go to the school, all we do is talk. So why can't we do this over the phone and let the child stay in school? Their way doesn't make sense.

I'm a graduate of Booker T. myself. It's a nice school. The separation between me and his mother has had something to do with it [son's having problems in school].

Children need to participate in geographical travelling - Not just Washington D.C. They should go to different cities like Rome, Italy. It would motivate children to perform well. Make children aware of what's happening in the world and other states. Maybe a visit to Pennsylvania Dutch country.

Trips to the hospital for pregnancy prevention, or to see what can happen to a person on drugs, to reinforce about what they see in the films at school....

He doesn't like school.... He's 15 and I'm so far successful in keeping him in school. But he needs help. He needs a trade.

The various comments from parents suggest that the P.A.T. Team may want to consider ways in which the school can provide more opportunities for parents to show their support and to give feedback to the school -- such as a parents' byline in the Newsletter. Parents of students at all grade levels could be encouraged to write, call in, or ask teachers

questions as they occur throughout the year. The P.A.T. Team, other teachers, and administrators may want to address a few questions from parents in each issue of the Newsletter.

Recommendations To Improve Newsletters

Both the School Newsletter and the P.A.T. Newsletter provide important information for all parents. However, almost half of all parents did not receive *either* of the newsletters. Those who received newsletters were more informed about the school programs, but most families were uninformed. The P.A.T. Team, teachers, and administrators may want to consider the following recommendations to improve communications between the school and its families.

How Many Newsletters

One important decision that must be made is whether to have one or two newsletters (i.e., the principal's School Newsletter and/or the P.A.T. Newsletter). If there is only one, it may need to be longer in order to provide information to and include the participation of students, parents, and teachers.

If there are two, the focus of each should be clear so that readers look forward to and expect to find different types of information in each. For example, schoolwide or citywide information (including summaries of workshops) may be in the School Newsletter, and student-teacher-parent articles and information at the classroom level might be in the P.A.T. Newsletter.

Coordination and Staff of the Newsletters

Good communication between the school and its families requires a coordinator -- a person or team designated to solicit, collect, edit, and publish the newsletter(s). The P.A.T. Team and others at Booker T. will need to consider how best to fill this role. The "staff" might include parents, teachers, and students from each grade and/or subject area who work with the coordinator. Particular features might be assigned to each newsletter staff person.

Physical Characteristics, Printing, and Graphics

The P.A.T. Newsletter will attract a larger readership by improving the printing and organization of the paper. Features could rotate in each issue in order to sustain interest and preserve the brevity of the Newsletter. Or, the format could be expanded to incorporate more features and information. It would be helpful if some member of the Newsletter staff was talented in computer graphics or could learn about desk-top publishing.

Notification

It may be helpful to *mail* the first Newsletter home and inform parents when future issues will be sent home with their children. Parents could also be informed about the Newsletter at other opportunities such as report card pick-up, open-school week, and PTA meetings. A small announcement might be tucked into a summer mailing or mailings that go home during the school year to alert parents to expect their children to bring a Newsletter home. Children should be told explicitly that their parents and teachers expect them to deliver the Newsletter and they should be asked if they did so.

Timing of Publication

Many parents expressed the need for a calendar of events in order to better prepare for their children's involvement in school activities -- especially those that require even a small amount of money. Establishing a schedule for planning and creating newsletters would be helpful so that special events are featured well in advance.

If there are two newsletters, the Team might decide, for example, to alternate months of publication so that parents can expect one newsletter each month on a predictable schedule.

Children's Role in Family-School Connections

When asked how they learned what is happening at school, many parents said their children gave them information or brought dittos and memos home. The children are also supposed to deliver the newsletters. Parents of more successful students, students who like school, and parents of sixth graders were more likely to report they know what's going on at the school and in their children's classes. The students' participation in school-family communication is important and often a weak link.

Because students are responsible for delivery, they may be more motivated to bring newsletters home if their names, their friends' or teachers' names, or items mentioning their grade or class are prominently featured. Parents and students are more likely to become readers if the "news" concerns them more directly.

More Student Features

Readership of the Newsletter is likely to increase if it

includes more opportunities for student input such as articles, essays, and poems; more features in which students are recognized for their achievements in academic performance, citizenship, attendance and other talents; and letters to the editor.

Attention to Each Grade Level

A few parents suggested that each grade level be featured in each issue of the Newsletter. In addition, parents expressed a desire for more information about what their children are learning in their individual classes. Parents also would like features that highlight individual teachers' goals and projects.

Two-Way Communication

The Team may want to develop a way for parents and students to respond to the contents of the Newsletter, send in questions and concerns about school curricula, programs, services, policies and classroom activities, and receive answers through the next issue of the Newsletter.

Community Involvement

A few parents suggested that the Newsletter be circulated in the neighborhood and that students might be engaged in distributing the Newsletters to businesses and residences. The Team may want to consider attracting community or corporate sponsorship to defray some of the costs of publication and to harvest community support.

Use of the Telephone Survey

There are benefits that come from talking with families, even if not all are easily located. A telephone interview can include a more representative sample of parents who would not usually respond to a written questionnaire. Parents who read poorly may feel free to speak their minds. A combination of written and telephone surveys also may be used to advantage.

Conducting this telephone survey demonstrated the level of investment needed if the school wants to reach a representative sample of families. Many of the problems with the telephone survey method -- particularly changes in telephone numbers -- can be alleviated with attention to the quality of the school's telephone lists. Typically, the telephone numbers obtained at the beginning of the year are not very accurate by the end of the school year. This means that procedures are needed to check and update the lists of family phone numbers during the year, perhaps each time report cards are sent home. If the lists were accurate, random sample telephone surveys could be accomplished more smoothly and in a more reasonable amount of time.

Summary and Conclusions

Booker T. Washington Middle School parents expressed enthusiasm for the P.A.T. Team's parent involvement programs. They were grateful for an opportunity to offer their ideas to improve the Newsletter, and were pleased that the school is interested in what they have to say.

Parents were appreciative of the two newsletters and supported their continued use. Those who received the P.A.T. Newsletter were more aware of school programs than were non-recipients. Further, the Newsletter stimulated greater interest in knowing more about Booker T., its teachers, and programs.

Parents who attended workshops reported knowing more about special school programs. For parents who did not attend the workshops at the school building, the P.A.T. Newsletter fulfilled its original purpose of providing information from the workshops.

Significantly more parents of sixth graders, compared to parents of seventh graders or eighth graders, reported that the school gives them information about what is happening at school and in their children's classrooms. Parents who were aware of both newsletters also reported receiving more information about what is happening at school. The newsletters may help maintain a flow of information to parents across the grades.

The survey results provide information to Booker T.'s teachers and administrators about parents' interests in helping their children reach goals for achievement. Most parents want more communication with Booker T. to keep informed of their children's academic skills and other aspects of school programs, how to help their children at home in academic areas, and how to help their children cope with social pressures.

The newsletters are a good idea, should continue, and need to be improved -- especially in terms of distribution. The P.A.T. Team, teachers, and administrators should consider the thoughtful suggestions from parents to improve this important vehicle of communication to make it a school-to-home/home- to-school causeway to greater cooperation between Booker T. and its families.

Appendix A. TELEPHONE SURVEY OF NEWSLETTER IMPLEMENTATION EFFECTIVENESS
at Booker T. Washington Middle School #130
1301 McCulloh

FACE SHEET

TELEPHONE NUMBER_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

CASE #: _____

Write in TIME: ____AM ____PM

DATE: _____

INTERVIEWER: _____

For Coder

FINAL DISPOSITION:	
Length of Interview	

Complete.....1

No Locate.....2

Not Available.....3

Not Eligible.....4

Other.....5

SEND COMPLETE REPORT TO:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Call and Callback Schedule:

Date	Time of Day	Length of Interview (min.)	Name of Interviewer	Spoke to (relation to child):	Callback Date & Time or Comments:

Hello, my name is _____.
I am calling for the Parent Survey of Booker T. Washington Middle School.
Is this _____ (telephone number)?

NO ====> Sorry, I must have the wrong number. Good bye.

YES ====> (CONTINUE)

I would like to speak to the parent or guardian of a child who attends Booker T. Middle School.
Do you have a child who attends Booker T.?

NO====> Sorry to have disturbed you. I must have the wrong number. Good Bye.

YES===> Are you the parent or guardian?
PROBES: What is your relation to the child(ren) who go(es) to Booker T. Middle School?

YES ==>

(CIRCLE ANSWER)	MOTHER	GRANDMOTHER	AUNT	(WRITE IN) OTHER_____
	FATHER	GRANDFATHER	UNCLE	OTHER_____

IF NOT THE PARENT/GUARDIAN, ASK:
Are you the one at home who has the most contact this year with Booker T. Middle School? Would you feel comfortable answering a few questions about the school?
YES ==> RELATION? (WRITE ABOVE & GO TO TOP OF NEXT PAGE)==========>
NO===>

May I speak with the adult who has the most contact with the school and who knows the most about it?

YES

NO===> CONSULT "REFUSAL SHEET"

IF NOT HOME, ASK:==> Who Should I ask for when I call again?
When is the best time to call in the next day or two?
[INTERVIEWER: WRITE NEW DATE & TIME ON CALLBACK SCHEDULE]

NEW PERSON: INTRODUCE YOURSELF
PROBE: Do you have a child who attends Booker T. Middle School?
YES==> What is your relation to the child(ren) who go(es) to Booker T. Middle School?

(CIRCLE ANSWER)				(WRITE IN)
MOTHER	GRANDMOTHER	AUNT	OTHER_____	
FATHER	GRANDFATHER	UNCLE	OTHER_____	

(GO TO TOP OF NEXT PAGE)==========>

IF NOT NOW ==>Sorry to have called at a bad time.
When would be a good time to call back in the next day or two?
[INTERVIEWER: WRITE NEW DATE & TIME ON CALLBACK SCHEDULE]

You may have received a letter from the principal, Mrs. Bukatman, at Booker T. saying that someone may call you.
Did you receive that letter?

IF LETTER NOT RECEIVED, SAY: I am sorry it did not reach you. The letter was to let you know that someone representing the school would be calling you. (CONTINUE)

The teachers would like your ideas to plan and improve school projects and this will only take about 5 or 10 minutes. May I ask you a few questions about some of the activities at Booker T.?

NO===> [INTERVIEWER: CONSULT "REFUSAL SHEET" AND TRY TO OBTAIN A CALLBACK DATE & TIME. INDICATE ON CALLBACK SCHEDULE ON FACE SHEET.]

YES===> That's great. Thank you for participating.

Let me begin by asking you...

1. How many of your children attend Booker T. this year?

1 2 3 4 5 or more

☐☐

(CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)

2. What grades are they in at Booker T. right now?

2A. Is this a boy or a girl? (CIRCLE grade and B or G)

(WRITE IN)

6	7	8	Other_____
B / G	B / G	B / G	B / G

☐☐☐☐

3. Now I'd like to ask you some questions about Booker T.
Are you aware that Booker T. puts out <u>two</u> newsletters?

PROBES: the one- or two-page sheet from the Assistant Principal?
the one printed on colored paper and folded like a booklet?

_____ YES, TWO (2) ====> Do you happen to know the names of one or both of the newsletters? [(WRITE IN NAMES IF GIVEN)-> USE PROBES]

___YES-->_____/_____

___YES (SAY THEY KNOW, BUT NO NAMES GIVEN)
[--->GIVE NAMES TO CHECK.<---]

CONTINUE TO QUESTION 4 BELOW--THIS PAGE

_____ YES, ONE (1)====> Do you happen to know the name of the newsletter?
WHICH ONE? (USE PROBES) (WRITE IN NAMES IF GIVEN)

___YES-->(WRITE IN)_____

___SCHOOL ONLY ===> GO QUESTION 4 BELOW (THIS PAGE)

___P.A.T. ONLY ===> GO QUESTION 5 NEXT PAGE ======>

____ NO, KNOWS ABOUT NEITHER

(PROBES: Am I correct-You have not seen <u>any</u> newsletter from the school?
Not the one- or two-page sheet from the Assistant Principal?
Not the one printed on colored paper, folded like a small booklet?) ☐

GO TO **QUESTION 16**, PAGE 7---------->

IF BOTH or SCHOOL ONLY ASK:

4. **What do you think of the SCHOOL NEWSLETTER that comes from the Assistant Principal's office? Would you say it is...**

EXCELLENT?____ VERY GOOD?____ JUST OK?____ NOT GOOD AT ALL?____ ☐

4A. Would you say the School Newsletter is easy to read?

YES ___ SOMEWHAT ___ NO ___ ☐

4B. Does it give you information that <u>you</u> need?

YES ___ SOMEWHAT ___ NO ___ ☐

-->IF SCHOOL NEWSLETTER ONLY, GO TO **QUESTION 16**, PAGE 7 ---------->

QUESTION 5 Now the rest of my questions will be about the Parents and Teachers Newsletter, called the P. A. T. NEWSLETTER

Did your child bring home any of the P. A. T. Newsletters in the last 6 months?

PROBE: Let me check: We're talking about the one printed like a booklet on colored paper? (CHECK ONE)

_____NO =====>[USE PROBE]

_____NOT SURE =====>[USE PROBE]

IF DID NOT RECEIVE P. A. T.==>GO TO **QUESTION 16**, PAGE 7--->

_____YES ==> CONTINUE ☐

6. About How Many of the P. A. T. Newsletters did you receive?

1 2 3 4 5+ ☐

PROBE: Do you mean 1 or 2 or 3 P. A. T. Newsletters or the other one?

7. Of the P. A. T. Newsletters your child brought home, Would you say you've read...

ALL ___ MOST ___ AT LEAST ONE ___ or NONE ___ ☐

8. Does anyone else in your household read the P. A. T. Newsletter?

___ YES PROBE: Who would that be?_____ Anyone else?_____ ☐

_____NO

9. Has your child's name, class, your child's grade level, or teacher's name ever appeared in the P. A. T. Newsletter? (USE PROBES.)

_____YES (WRITE IN IF GIVEN)_____

_____NO

_____DON'T KNOW ☐

Now I would like to ask you your opinions about the P. A. T. Newsletter.

10. What do you think of the newsletter? Would you say the Newsletter is...

EXCELLENT?___ PRETTY ENJOYABLE? ____ JUST OK?___ BORING? ___ A WASTE OF TIME?_____

11. What kinds of information or features did you like most? (Anything else?)

_____

_____

12. Would you say the Newsletter is...
(PROBES, ONLY IF RESPONDENT DOESN'T UNDERSTAND)

TOO LONG (meaning it has too many articles to read and too many pages)
TOO SHORT (meaning it has too few articles and too few pages)
or JUST RIGHT (or it has just the right number of articles and pages)?

(CHECK ANSWER)

TOO LONG? ____ TOO SHORT? ____ JUST RIGHT?____

13. Would you say the print in the P. A. T. Newsletter is...

CLEAR & EASY TO READ? ____ SOMETIMES EASY SOMETIMES HARD? ____ UNCLEAR & HARD TO READ? ____

14. Would you say the <u>words</u> in the P. A. T. Newsletter are...

EASY TO UNDERSTAND? ____ SOMETIMES EASY SOMETIMES HARD? ____ HARD TO UNDERSTAND? ____
(meaning words are too difficult)

15. **How would you improve the P. A. T. Newsletter? Do you have any suggestions? Or Would you Add or Change anything?** [Anything else?]

_____

_____

CONTINUE ====>NEXT PAGE---------->

44

----------FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS----------

Now I'd like to ask you some other questions about Booker T.

QUESTION 16

Does the school help you know what is going on there?
Would you say the school gives you...

A LOT? ___ of information | SOME ___ information? | A LITTLE ___ information? | NOT MUCH ___ information at all? ☐

17. **Would you say that the school helps you know what your child is learning and what is happening in your child's classes?**
Would you say the school gives you...

A LOT ___ of information? | SOME ___ information? | A LITTLE ___ information? | NOT MUCH ___ information at all? ☐

18. How do you learn what is happening at school?
[PROMPTS: Like dittos, or notes, or phone calls? Anything else?]

.....

.....

..... ☐☐☐☐☐☐

19A. Have you attended any workshops at Booker T. this year?

YES_____ Which one(s)_____

NO _____ ☐☐

19B. If you cannot attend a workshop, do you get any information about it?

___YES ===> From where? _____

Any other way? _____

___ NO ☐☐

20. Please tell me, by answering YES, or NO. Has the school given you any information about any of the following school programs...
[INTERVIEWER: PROMPT AS NECESSARY CIRCLE ANSWER.]

Has the school given you information about...

The Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program? YES or NO [PROMPT: That the students put on a little play (or skits) about difficult situations. They call themselves the Family Circle Satellite Theater?]	YES	NO	☐
Project DARE, also known as The Workshop On Drug-Free Children? [PROMPT: Drug Abuse Resistance Education?]	YES	NO	☐
The School Yearbook?	YES	NO	☐
Workshop about Jobs for Parents? [PROMPT: The program was put on by the YMCA and The Housing Authority of Baltimore City.]	YES	NO	☐
How to Help at Home with Homework? **[PROMPT: Steps you can take to encourage your children to complete their work at home?]**	YES	NO	☐
The Champions of Courage Writing Contest? [PROMPT: This was the Fox 45 Black History Month Contest]	YES	NO	☐
Coaching Classes at 3 PM after school?	YES	NO	☐
Volunteers at school? [PROMPT: Parents at school]	YES	NO	☐
Awards for Students?	YES	NO	☐
Workshops that Took Place at School?	YES	NO	☐

P. A. T. RECIPIENTS ===>GO TO Question 21 NEXT PAGE ====>

_____ DID NOT RECEIVE P. A. T. NEWSLETTER _____

QUESTION 20A

I understand you have not seen the P. A. T. Newsletter, but let me ask you this: What do you think a good newsletter <u>should</u> include?

[PROBES: What kinds of information or features would you want to see in a school newsletter? Anything else?]

.....

.....

.....

Anything else?

.....

.....

(GO TO NEXT PAGE=====>)

CODER

QUESTION 21.
Now I am going to ask you a different type of question.
I'm going to read you a list of school subjects.
Please tell me YES or NO whether you want more information about the subject in order to help your child at home.

For each subject, just tell me YES, or NO.
Do you want more information about...

	(CHECK ANSWER IN BOX)		Coder
Math	YES	NO	
Social Studies	YES	NO	
Reading	YES	NO	
Science	YES	NO	
English	YES	NO	
Testing Skills	YES	NO	

22. Are there any other subjects that I haven't mentioned that you'd like more information about? PROMPT: What subjects might they be?

_____

_____

☐

23. Is there anything else you want to know about Booker T. this year? PROBES: Activities? Programs? Workshops? [PROMPT: Anything else?]

_____

_____

☐

WE'RE JUST ABOUT FINISHED.

24. Finally, I would like to ask you just a few questions about yourself so that we can group your ideas with the ideas of other families like yours.

How is your child doing at Booker T. this year? Would you say he/she is...

[IF MORE THAN ONE CHILD, FOR OLDEST CHILD]

[INTERVIEWER: CHECK RESPONSE.]

A TOP STUDENT? _____
A GOOD STUDENT? _____
AN AVERAGE STUDENT? _____
A FAIR STUDENT? _____
A POOR STUDENT? _____

☐

25. How does your child like Booker T. this year?
Would you say your child likes school...

A LOT? ____ SOME? ____ A LITTLE? ____ NOT AT ALL? ____

☐

26. What is the highest grade level you completed in school?

(WAIT FOR & CIRCLE RESPONSE)

6 7 8 9 10 11 12 some college completed college Other_____ (WRITE IN)

==> CHECK: Did you have any other training or education after that? Anything else?

(PROBE AS NECESSARY: Did you complete 8th grade?
Did you complete high school?
Did you go beyond high school?
Did you complete college?)

☐

27. Do you work outside the home -- Full-time or Part-time?

FULL-TIME_____ PART-TIME ____ DOES NOT WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME ____

☐

~~~~~ END OF INTERVIEW:

I'd like to thank you very much for your time and ideas. The school will send you a summary of the results from all the families in a newsletter later in the year (probably in September).

Do you have any other questions you want to ask me right now?

NO====> Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with me. Good bye.

YES===> [INTERVIEWER: YOU MAY ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SURVEY.
CONSULT "QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SURVEY (WHAT THE FAMILY MIGHT ASK")

_____

_____

☐

Or

IF QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SCHOOL===> I do not have information to answer your questions about the school, but I will put your questions in the survey for the school to consider.

_____

_____

☐

Is there anything else?

_____

_____

☐

Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with me. Good bye.
~~~~~

APPENDIX B. Booker T. Washington Middle School
PARENT TELEPHONE SURVEY RESULTS

Date of Interviews

5/15	5/16-20	5/21-23	5/24-25	5/29-30
11.4%	14.4%	48.6%	20%	5.8%

Percent Calls by Interviewer:

#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
50%	5.7%	12.9%	1.4%	30%

Length of Interview

5-9 Min.	10 Min.	11-15 Min.	6-20 Min.	21-25 Min.
10.3%	39.7%	19.1%	20.7%	10.3%

Number of Calls to Obtain an Interivew (N=70) **1** 34.3% **2** 28.6% **3** 15.7% **4-9** 21.4%

Are you the parent or guardian? What is your relation to the child(ren) who go(es) to BOOKER T.?

MOTHER 75.7% **FATHER** 11.4% **GRANDMOTHER** 4.3% **AUNT** 2.9% **UNCLE** 1.4%
OTHER 4.3%

1. How many of your children attend Booker T. this year? N=81 children

One 85.7% **Two** 12.9% **Three** 1.4%

2. What grades are they in at Booker T. right now?
2A. Is this a boy or a girl?

	% in Grade	% Boys	N	% Girls	N	Highest Grade of a Child
Six	25.9%	62%	13	38%	8	20%
Seven	46.9%	57.9%	22	42.1%	16	50%
Eight	25.9%	66.7%	14	33.3%	7	30%
Special	1.4%	100%	1			**Boys=61%** **Girls=39%**
N=	**(81)**		**(50)**		**(31)**	**(70)**

3. Now I'd like to ask you some questions about Booker T.
Are you aware that Booker T. puts out two newsletters? (N=69)

Unaware of EITHER	Aware of SCHOOL ONLY	Aware of P.A.T. ONLY	Aware of BOTH
46.4%	17.4%	11.6%	24.6%

4. What do you think of the short one-page SCHOOL NEWSLETTER that comes from the principal's office? Would you say it is...(n=27)

EXCELLENT? 3.7% **VERY GOOD?** 77.8% **JUST OK?** 18.5%

4A. Would you say the school newsletter is easy to read?

YES 92.6% **SOMEWHAT** 7.4% **NO** 0%

4B. Does it give you information that <u>you</u> need?

YES 63% **SOMEWHAT** 33.3% **NO** 3.7%

6. About how many of the P.A.T. Newsletters did you receive? (N=70)

None 67.1% **1** 10% **2** 12.9% **3** 5.7% **4** 2.9% **5 or more** 1.4%

7. Of the P.A.T. Newsletters your child brought home, Would you say you've read... (N=23)

ALL 34.8% **MOST** 39.1% **AT LEAST ONE** 21.7% **NONE** 4.3%

8. Does anyone else in your household read the P.A.T. Newsletter ? (N=23)

YES 39.1% **NO** 60.9%

Mother* 4.3% **Father** 4.3% **Grandmother** 4.3%

Uncle 4.3% **Sibling(s)** 26.1% **Other** 4.3%

***If not respondent**

9. Has your child's name, class, teacher's name, or your child's grade level ever appeared in the P.A.T. Newsletter? (N=23)

YES 60.9% **NO** 21.7% **DON'T KNOW** 17.3%

Child's Name	Child's Class	Teacher's Name	Child's Grade	Other
8.7%	8.7%	34.8%	26.1%	4.3%

10. What do you think of the newsletter? Would you say the Newsletter is... (N=22)

EXCELLENT?	PRETTY ENJOYABLE?	JUST OK?	BORING	A WASTE OF TIME
13.6%	31.8%	50%	4.5%	0%

11. What kinds of information or features did you like most?(Anything else?) N=21

Number of Features mentioned: **None** 23.8% **One:** 52.4% **Two or more:** 23.9%

Curriculum:	33.3%	**School Events:**	33.3%	**Community events:**	9.5%
About workshops:	14.3%	**Classes/Teachers:**	9.5%	**Other Features:**	14.3%

12. Would you say the Newsletter is... (n=22)

TOO LONG? 4.5% **TOO SHORT?** 13.6% **JUST RIGHT?** 81.8%

13. Would you say the print of the P.A.T.Newsletter is...

EASY TO READ 47.8% **SOMETIMES EASY SOMETIMES HARD** 47.8% **HARD TO READ** 4.3%

14. Would you say the <u>words</u> in the P.A.T. Newsletter are

CLEAR & EASY TO UNDERSTAND 91.3% **SOMETIMES EASY SOMETIMES HARD** 8.7% **HARD TO READ** 0%

15. How would you improve the P.A.T. Newsletter? Do you have any suggestions? Or would you add or change anything?

Suggestions, N= 12

Appearance:	50.0%	**Students' Progress:**	16.7%
Delivery Distribution:	33.3%	**Students' Input:**	16.7%
Writing/Organization:	25.0%	**Other:**	25.0%
Teachers' Input:	25.0%		

16. Does the school help you know what is going on <u>there</u>? (N=70) Would you say the school gives you...

A LOT 30% **of information?**	**SOME?** 31.4% **information?**	**A LITTLE** 18.6% **information?**	**NOT MUCH** 20% **information at all?**

17. Would you say that the school helps you know what your child is learning and what is happening in your child's classes? Would you say the school gives you... (N=70)

A LOT? 34.3% **SOME THINGS?** 30.0% **A LITTLE?** 15.7% **NOT MUCH AT ALL?** 20%

18. How do you learn what is happening at school? (N=70)

Number of ways parent learns about school:
One: 28.6% **Two:** 50% **Three:** 12.9% **Four:** 8.6%

Dittos	Notes	Phone calls	Visits	Child tells	Report cards	Other
28.6%	34.3%	25.7%	51.4%	40%	17.1%	5.7%

19A. Number of workshops attended (N=69)
None: 88.4% **One:** 10.1% **Two:** 1.4%

19B. If you cannot attend a workshop, do you get any information about it? (N=68)
Yes: 42.6% **No:** 57.4%

If yes, from where?

Newsletter	Child	Other parents	Neighbors	Other
23 5%	20.6%	2.9%	4.4%	7.4%

20. Has the school given you information about... (N=68)

Pregnancy Prevention	**YES**	31.9%	**NO**	68.1%
Project DARE	**YES**	42.0%	**NO**	58.0%
Student Yearbook	**YES**	52.2%	**NO**	47.8%
Jobs for Parents	**YES**	23.2%	**NO**	76.8%
Homework Tips	**YES**	46.4%	**NO**	53.6%
Champions of Courage	**YES**	33.3%	**NO**	66.7%
Coaching Classes	**YES**	58.8%	**NO**	41.2%
Volunteers at School	**YES**	44.8%	**NO**	55.2%
Awards for Students	**YES**	64.7%	**NO**	35.3%
Workshops	**YES**	38.2%	**NO**	61.8%

20A. (FOR NON-RECIPIENTS ONLY)

What do you think a good newsletter <u>should</u> include? (N=40)

Number of suggestions made:

One: 15% **Two:** 30% **Three:** 32.5% **Four:** 15% **Five:** 7.5%

Events:	60%	**Extra-curricular:**	20%	**How Parents**	
Meetings:	22.5%	**About Students:**	52.5%	**can Help:**	17.5%
Curriculum:	17.5%	**Teachers/Classes:**	22.5%	**Other:**	47.5%

21. For each subject, just tell me YES, or NO. Do you want more information about... (N=68)

Testing Skills	**YES**	92.6%	**NO**	7.4%
Math	**YES**	89.7%	**NO**	10.3%
English	**YES**	83.8%	**NO**	16.2%
Science	**YES**	83.8%	**NO**	16.2%
Reading	**YES**	82.4%	**NO**	17.6%
Social Studies	**YES**	73.5%	**NO**	26.5%

22. Are there any other subjects that I haven't mentioned that you'd like more information about? (N=69)

% Requesting More Information:	27.5%	**Drugs Education:**	2.9%
Sex Education:	7.2%	**Vocational Education:**	2.9%
Art:	4.3%	**Black History:**	2.9%
Computer:	4.3%	**Other:**	11.6%

23. Is there anything else you want to know about Booker T. this year? (N=69)

% Making Requests:	46.4%		
Students' Self Esteem:	21.7%	**General:**	8.7%
Parent Involvement:	14.5%	**Summer Programs:**	7.2%
School Policy:	11.6%	**Extra-Curricualr:**	7.2%
Curriculum:	10.1%	**Graduation:**	5.8%
About Teachers:	8.7%	**Other Concerns:**	13.0%

24. How is your child doing in school this year? Would you say your child is...
[FOR CHILD in highest grade AT BOOKER T.] **(N=69)**

TOP 7.2% **GOOD** 30.4 % **AVERAGE** 30.4% **FAIR** 21.7% **POOR** 10.1%

25. How does your child like school this year? Would you say your child likes school... (N=69)

A LOT 59.4% **SOME** 26.1% **A LITTLE** 8.7% **NOT AT ALL** 5.8%

26. What is the highest grade level <u>you</u> completed in school? (N=68)

6th-9th	10th-11th	Completed High School	Some College	Completed College
117.6%	23.5%	30.9%	22.1%	5.9%

No Other Training 42.6% **Military or Other Training** 57.4%

27. Do you work outside the home -- Full-time or Part-time? (N=69)

FULL-TIME 46.4% **PART-TIME** 15.9% **DOES NOT WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME** 37.7%

>>> END OF INTERVIEW <<<

28. Do you have any other questions you want to ask me right now? (N=69)

No Questions 81.2% **Some Questions** 18.8%